



Success News

San Antonio District Office
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RELEASE DATE: IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Release Number: #06-51

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CARMELO'S RISTORANTE

Marching to the Beat of a Different Accordionist

Austin, TX – A native Sicilian, and now Texan by heart, Carmelo Mauro childhood dream was that of travel and success. Carmelo was born in Toarmina, Sicily and he quickly realized that the hotel industry would be his means of travel.

Carmelo began his hotel career as a bellhop and worked his way up to general manager. He was accepted for an apprenticeship in the Franfurter Hoff in Fankfurt, Germany where he learned German. For the next 20 years, he worked for various international hotels allowing him to travel to Europe, Africa, Bermuda, and the Cayman Isles. During his travels he also learned to speak English, French, and Spanish for a total of 5 languages!

In 1978, Carmelo, his wife Hilary, and daughter Luisa moved to Houston to follow their dream of opening their own romantic "Old World" Italian restaurant. His first attempt was disastrous. His two partners took all his money. His remaining assets were in the Cayman Islands and he would have to first liquidate his assets before a lender would consider lending him any money.

Carmelo and Hilary's next opportunity came about through Allied Adickes Bank (defunct). The lender understood the caliber of the type of Italian restaurant Carmelo and Hilary had in mind and he recognized the need for this type of restaurant. The funds for the restaurant were acquired from the lender through an SBA 7a guaranteed loan. The site for Carmelo's first restaurant was

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an old vacant swimming pool warehouse which was transformed by Carmelo to an upscale Italian restaurant with a seating capacity of 120. The restaurant finally opened in 1981 and was a success! .

In 1985 Carmelo and Hilary expanded their restaurant to Austin, TX to the "Old Depot Hotel," the oldest standing train depot in the state of Texas. In 1991, Carmelo and Hilary once again sought financial assistance for their expansion through a 7a SBA guaranteed loan facilitated by Compass Bank. Carmelo's Ristorante in Austin also captures the romantic "Old World" Italian atmosphere with a "luxurious ambiance" and accomplished accordionists recreating the rolls of strolling Italian street musicians.

Carmelo, a master chef and restaurateur, has been committed to quality, even while undergoing economic downturns. In 1997 he was recognized as an honoree of the Blue Chip Enterprise Initiative, an annual program that recognizes small firms that have overcome challenges. This is one of several awards he has received to honor him for his success and dedication to community service.

Carmelo's Ristorante has also taken a historic leap in the restaurant industry by being the first in the nation to pioneer a school based restaurant. In 2001 the Del Valle High School opened providing students with necessary tools needed to successfully pursue a career in business. Carmelo's Ristorante, built within the school, serves as a business laboratory accompanied by a 3-year curriculum.

How does one succeed? "The most important thing is to believe in yourself, know what you are doing and surround yourself with people who believe in you and want to grow with you," says Carmelo. "Then the rest just follows."

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